

(WASHINGTON) – June 25, 2013, marked the one year anniversary of the Supreme Court's decision in *Miller v. Alabama*. In their decision, Justices of the Court ruled that mandatory sentences of life without the possibility of parole may not be imposed on children. Following the anniversary, Ranking Member of the U.S. House Judiciary Committee Congressman John Conyers, Jr. (D-Mich.) and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (D-Va.) issued the following statement:

"One year ago, in the case of *Miller v. Alabama*, the U.S. Supreme Court issued an historic ruling that mandatory life sentences for children without any possibility of parole are unconstitutional. In marking this anniversary, we applaud the Justices of Supreme Court for their compassion and commitment to the 8th Amendment's prohibition against cruel and unusual punishment. "Our children are precious, and for too long our Nation's juvenile justice laws have punished children in some of the harshest terms imaginable. In fact, the United States stands alone in the world as the only country on earth that imposes sentences of life without parole for crimes committed by children. Though children must be held accountable if they commit serious crimes, our laws should not be so heartless that they would throw a child away for life.

"For the past 100 years, Courts have held that, as juveniles are still in cognitive and emotional development, they should not be treated as adults in the criminal justice system. Previously, it was ruled that capital punishment imposed on juveniles was unconstitutional. In later cases, the Court ruled that it was unconstitutional to impose sentences of life without parole in non-homicide cases. Now, as a result of the Court's decision one year ago, juveniles cannot be subject to mandatory life sentences without parole even in homicide cases.

"The sentencing court should have an opportunity to review the individual circumstances of each case before imposing the draconian punishment of life without parole, and, for children, such a sentence cannot be mandatory without such individualized consideration.

"We hope that in the aftermath of this historic decision, our juvenile justice policies turn towards prevention and rehabilitation, such as the enactment of the Youth Promise Act. Saving children before they head down the wrong path is not just good policy, but the decent approach that a compassionate society should take."

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